United Nations A/59/663–S/2005/5

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
6 January 2005

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session
Agenda items 36, 37, 62 and 148

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Sixtieth year

Letter dated 3 January 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the final communiqué (see annex I) and the Manama Declaration (see annex II), which were adopted by the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its twenty-fifth session, held in the Kingdom of Bahrain on 20 and 21 December 2004 under the chairmanship of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

I would be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its annexes as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 36, 37, 62 and 148.

(*Signed*) Tawfeeq Ahmed **Almansoor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I to the letter dated 3 January 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Final communiqué adopted by the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its twenty-fifth session

**Zayed Summit, Manama, Bahrain, 9 Dhu'lqa'dah 1425 A.H.
(21 December 2004 A.D.)**

At the invitation of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held its twenty-fifth session in Manama, Bahrain, on 8 and 9 Dhu'lqa'da 1425 (20 and 21 December 2004) under the chairmanship of His Majesty. The meeting was attended by:

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates;

His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, Second Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Aviation and Inspector-General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia;

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman;

His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Amir of Qatar; and

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait.

His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, also participated in the meeting.

The Supreme Council expressed its sincere compliments and best wishes to His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa and to the judicious Government and beloved people of Bahrain on the occasion of their glorious 33rd national holiday, wishing the Kingdom and its people continuous progress and prosperity.

The Council expressed its profound sorrow over the death of His Highness the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates — may God rest his soul — who departed this world after a life filled with glorious works and great achievements and with true giving and tireless, sincere work for the benefit of the United Arab Emirates, its progress and prosperity and the welfare of its people. The Council presented its heartfelt condolences to the leadership, Government and people of the United Arab Emirates, as well as to the Arab Nation and the Islamic Ummah, for this great loss. In addition, the Council expressed its genuine appreciation for the role played by the deceased in strengthening the Gulf Cooperation Council, to whose establishment he greatly contributed, and for his great efforts in advancing the causes of the Arab Nation and the Islamic Ummah and promoting peace in the region and in the world. The Council is grateful to His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa for his initiative in naming the twenty-fifth session of the Supreme Council of the GCC the "Zayed Summit".

The Council welcomed His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and expressed its absolute confidence that he would enhance with his wisdom the active role of the United Arab Emirates in supporting the blessed work of the GCC.

The Council also expressed its profound sorrow over the death of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat — may God grant him eternal peace — who departed this world after a life of struggle for the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent State on their national soil. The Council presented its sincere condolences to the Palestinian people, as well as to the Arab Nation and the Islamic Ummah, on this great loss.

The Council reviewed the achievements realized in cooperation in all sectors since the previous session. It performed an overall assessment of political and security issues at all levels, both regional and international, in the light of recent events and developments affecting the Gulf region and the world at large.

In its desire to strengthen cooperation, the Council reviewed the recommendations and follow-up reports submitted by the Ministerial Council and took the necessary decisions with regard to them, as follows:

In its desire to strengthen Gulf citizenship and provide insurance protection to nationals of GCC States who are employed in GCC States other than their own, the Council endorsed the conclusions of the ad hoc committees regarding the extension of the insurance umbrella to retirement and social insurance institutions so as to cover such nationals, owing to the social security that this provides for such persons and their families.

In that connection, the Council welcomed the law promulgated by His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, whereby both natural and artificial persons nationals of GCC States are permitted to carry on all economic activities and professions agreed upon within the GCC framework, an initiative considered as helping to promote cooperation and Gulf citizenship.

The Council reviewed the results of the preliminary studies of the economic feasibility of the project to build a railway network connecting the GCC countries to facilitate the transport of their nationals and promote greater and more streamlined commercial transport among them and the project for water interconnection among those countries and gave instructions for the completion of the necessary studies for the two projects.

The Council considered a progress report on the implementation of the "smart card" project for the GCC countries, according to which the card would become tantamount to a national identity card for nationals of those countries. The Council gave instructions for the completion of the work on the project and the establishment of suitable mechanisms for its implementation.

With a view to the integration and harmonization of regulations and economic policies, the Council approved a number of uniform laws in the agricultural and industrial fields, including the uniform industrial organization act for the GCC States, one of the most important objectives of which is to encourage and promote industrial enterprises, increase the share of the industrial sector in the gross product and broaden the base of economic relations in the GCC countries.

Regarding the economic relations of the GCC countries with countries and international groups, the Council familiarized itself with the developments that had

taken place in that sphere during 2004, the agreements signed for the creation of free trade zones and framework agreements for economic cooperation between the countries of the GCC and such countries and international groups.

In view of the importance of dealing with the effects of the increase in labour coming to member States, the Council considered the note of the secretariat on that subject and approved the concepts and proposals on dealing with those effects, considering this a vital issue characterized by constant fluctuation with changes in the economic, social and development spheres.

The Council, realizing the importance of protecting the environment and its natural resources, approved uniform environmental criteria and standards in the areas of noise, air quality and waste water, viewed as a minimum for legislation that must be adopted for preparing or developing national criteria and standards in the GCC countries.

In the field of protection of the marine environment against pollution, the Council emphasized the need for speedy completion of the much-needed ballast-water collection facilities and for accession by member States to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (Marpol 73/78).

With a view to furthering joint environmental action, the Council gave instructions to expedite coordination and implementation so as to impel that action towards the achievement of the desired environmental protection goals. The Council stressed that the preservation of the environment and its renewable natural resources and the protection and development of wildlife had become an absolute necessity for achieving sustainable development aimed at improving the standard of living and well-being of humankind in the GCC countries. The Council called upon the competent authorities to accelerate the translation of environmental regulations, laws, standards and criteria into practical programmes carried out in accordance with development plans, with emphasis on the training of national human resources, more intensive consciousness-raising programmes in the media and in school curricula and closer cooperation and coordination between the competent environmental agencies in GCC countries and regional and international organizations, with a view to achieving the goals of sustainable development.

The Council considered the follow-up report on its decision concerning the comprehensive development of education, stressing that implementation priority should be accorded to decisions issued by the Supreme Council. It impressed on the committees concerned the need to expedite the implementation of the plans and programmes arising from the decisions adopted in that regard and to establish appropriate mechanisms for that purpose.

In keeping with the desire of the leaders of the GCC States to promote legal cooperation, the Supreme Council adopted the Kuwait document on a uniform code on the guardianship of property of minors and other legally incompetent persons for the GCC States, to serve as a guideline, for a period of four years.

The Council approved the extension of the validity of the Muscat document on a uniform personal status code for the GCC countries, as a guideline, for a further four-year period in order to give the member States more time to make use of it. It also approved the extension of the validity of the Riyadh document on a uniform code of criminal procedure for the GCC countries, as a guideline, until its revision and adoption in its final form.

With regard to military cooperation and coordination, the Council considered and endorsed the results of the third periodic meeting of the Joint Defence Council. It also approved the creation of a decoration to be awarded to members of the armed forces of GCC countries who belonged to the Al-Jazeera (Peninsula) Shield force, in accordance with the conditions and procedural modalities established for that purpose. The Council expressed its satisfaction over the military progress made in various fields and the steps taken and achievements realized in that regard.

Owing to the importance of strengthening coordination and cooperation in the field of security, the Council considered a detailed report on measures being adopted by member States, information exchange and ongoing coordination among security organs, in accordance with the relevant decisions, the latest of which were those adopted by the Ministers of the Interior at their twenty-third meeting, held in Kuwait in October 2004. The Council expressed satisfaction at the steps taken and the achievements realized in the various areas of security cooperation.

The Council reviewed the dangerous acts of terrorism that had been witnessed both in the region and elsewhere. In that context, the Council reiterated its condemnation and repudiation of terrorism in all its forms, wherever it might occur and whatever its sources, motives or stated justifications might be. At the same time, the Council reaffirmed the clear and firm positions of the GCC countries on combating terrorism, cutting off its sources of financing by every available means and treating its causes and underlying motives, locally as well as regionally and internationally, and also drew attention to the need to distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate right of peoples to resist occupation, in accordance with the resolutions constituting international legitimacy.

In that connection the Supreme Council expressed its condemnation of the terrorist act recently committed against the consulate of the United States of America in the governorate of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, which had resulted in the deaths of a number of innocent people. It expressed its condolences to the families of the victims and commended the Saudi Arabian security forces on their ability to cope with the terrorist event and end it skilfully and expeditiously.

The Council reiterated its absolute support for and solidarity with Saudi Arabia in its efforts and in all the measures that country might take with a view to preserving security and stability and eliminating the misguided group that adopted criminal terrorist acts as a course of action, one rejected by every principle of religious law and all the moral values and principles of mankind. The Council affirmed that the true Islamic religion was based on justice, compassion and tolerance and forbade and criminalized any act involving aggression against or harm to innocent people, for Islam was meant to preserve the blameless soul and forbade killing, threatening or torturing it.

Reaffirming the support of the GCC countries for regional and international efforts to combat terrorism, the Council welcomed Bahrain's hosting the regional bureau for the Middle East and North Africa for combating money-laundering and preventing terrorist financing.

Regarding the work of the Supreme Council's Advisory Board, the Council acquainted itself with the Board's views on the role of the private sector in enhancing communication between residents of the GCC countries, the obstacles to trade between those countries and the question of youth and the means of ensuring

the welfare of young people. It decided to adopt them and forward them to the competent ministerial committees in order that the necessary mechanisms might be created for their implementation. The Council approved the Board's continuing to study the question of assessing the progress of the GCC over the previous 23 years and charged the Board with studying the phenomenon of terrorism during its coming session.

The Council reviewed the progress made in the area of media cooperation among GCC countries and gave instructions for the adoption of the mechanisms proposed by the ministers of information for the implementation of the Advisory Board's opinions on information issues, which had been approved by the Supreme Council at its twenty-second session in Muscat.

Concerning the continued occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, namely the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, the Council reaffirmed its well-known, unchanging position, which has been affirmed in all its previous communiqués, in support of the sovereign right of the United Arab Emirates over the three islands and the related territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, considered as an inseparable part of the United Arab Emirates.

The Council also expressed its regret that contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran had not produced, to date, any results that might significantly contribute toward a solution to the question, which would in turn contribute to the security and stability of the region.

The Council affirmed that it would continue to consider all peaceful means conducive to restoring the rights of the United Arab Emirates in respect of its three islands and to obtaining a response from the Islamic Republic of Iran to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates and the international community towards resolving the issue by recourse to the International Court of Justice or other peaceful means.

The Council examined the continued lack of stability and security, and the extent to which it affected internal affairs, in its sister country Iraq. The Council expressed alarm, in particular, at the effects of that situation on Iraqi civilians and the Iraqi infrastructure and the consequent increase in the suffering of the Iraqi people. In that connection the Council reaffirmed the position it had consistently expressed in its earlier communiqués, namely its total sympathy and solidarity with the Iraqi people in their current afflictions; its rejection of anything that might lead to a break-up of Iraq; the need to maintain Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; non-interference in its internal affairs; and an appeal to other parties to adopt the same approach.

The Council expressed its hope that the United States Administration would work effectively with the United Nations and the international community in every way to enable all segments of the Iraqi people to participate in the political process in Iraq, which involved the holding of elections, for such a process would help to enable the Iraqi people to determine their political and economic future, provide security and stability and make Iraq once again an active, positive member of its international and Arabian Gulf environment, as provided in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004).

In keeping with the desire of the leaders of the GCC countries for the realization of the aspirations of our brothers and sisters, the Iraqi people, the

Council condemned explosions and terrorist acts that targeted civilians and humanitarian and religious institutions and the kidnapping and torture of innocent persons. It expressed its condolences to the families and relatives of the victims of those crimes and its solidarity with their States. The Council also condemned the deliberate mass killing of Iraqis and of Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees as well as nationals of other countries committed by the previous Iraqi regime and the mass burials that had been discovered, which amounted to a material, flagrant violation of human rights, the principles of Islam and moral principles in general, and Arab values.

The Council once again called upon the United Nations, in cooperation with the interim Iraqi Government, to make the necessary efforts towards a final solution to the question of the return of Kuwaiti property and the national archives of the State of Kuwait, of which the previous Iraqi regime had taken possession at the time of its occupation of Kuwait.

The Council reviewed the developments in Palestine and the ongoing hostile practices against unarmed Palestinians which the Israeli Government followed, defying international customs and covenants and the resolutions constituting international legitimacy, ignoring Arab and international initiatives and placing every possible obstacle in the way of efforts to revive the peace process.

The Council mentioned the wisdom and sense of responsibility evinced by the Palestinian leadership in effecting the transfer of authority with the utmost ease. This will inevitably shore up internal security, strengthen legitimacy and the role of political institutions and consecrate the unity of the Palestinian people. It is important and indeed essential to take advantage of the propitious circumstances and available opportunities in order to serve the Palestinian people's just cause, so as to enable them to regain their legitimate rights, including the right to establish an independent State on their national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The Supreme Council expressed its wishes to the Palestinian leadership for success through continued solidarity and cooperation in dealing with future challenges.

The Council also expressed the hope that President George Bush, during his second term of office, would accord the question of the Middle East extremely high priority in the foreign policy of the United States of America so as to fulfil the promises made and the commitments undertaken regarding the establishment of a viable Palestinian State living in security and peace side by side with the State of Israel. It further expressed the aspiration that the Quartet would continue its efforts to mobilize the peace process in the Middle East in accordance with the requirements and the bases laid down in the road map and the Arab initiative, in addition to continuing its efforts to prepare a climate that would facilitate the Palestinian political process.

The Supreme Council demanded that Israel withdraw fully from all the occupied Arab lands in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the Shab`a Farms in southern Lebanon.

The Council reaffirmed its strong desire for GCC countries to support political and economic stability and security in their sister country Lebanon and to condemn Israeli acts of aggression against its sovereignty and independence.

The Council also called for efforts to make the Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction and for pressure on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and place all its nuclear installations under the international inspection regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and demanded that this should be made a fundamental condition for any future security arrangements.

The Council, expressing its appreciation for the enormous efforts of the Secretary-General and for his active contribution to promoting the work of the GCC, decided to renew the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah as Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council for an additional period of three years, starting 1 April 2005, and wished him every success in the performance of his duties during the coming period.

In keeping with the desire and the continued efforts of the GCC States to consummate the political, economic and social process currently under way in them, the Council reaffirmed the position and vision of those States and the Arab position expressed in the declaration of the Arab summit recently held in Tunis, namely that development and modernization must spring from the countries of the region and that the particularities and circumstances of those countries must be taken into account, be they political, economic, cultural or religious. Moreover, proceeding gradually in reaping the fruits of such development and modernization will make for greater stability, security and well-being in the region.

The Council expressed its great appreciation for the sincere efforts of His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait, and of his judicious Government during his chairmanship of the twenty-fourth session of the Supreme Council as well as for important achievements that expanded the fields and horizons of GCC cooperation, promoting greater progress and well-being for the peoples of the region.

The Council also expressed its great appreciation to His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, Chairman of the current session of the Supreme Council, and to his Government and magnanimous people for the generous hospitality and genuine fraternal sentiments with which the leaders of the GCC countries had been received. Those leaders commended the attention and interest accorded by His Majesty to the gathering as well as his judicious conduct of the proceedings, which had played a major role in bringing important results and decisions. They further expressed the conviction that Bahrain, in presiding over the work of the session under the leadership of His Highness, would help to promote the GCC process and guide it towards new horizons, taking into account prevailing local, regional and international conditions, so as to realize the aspirations and ambitions of the peoples of the GCC countries.

The Supreme Council looks forward to its twenty-sixth session, scheduled to be held in the United Arab Emirates in Dhu'lqa`da 1426 A.H. (December 2005 A.D.) at the kind invitation of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

Manama
9 Dhu'lqa`da 1425 A.H.
(21 December 2004 A.D.)

Annex II to the letter dated 3 January 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Manama Declaration adopted by the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its twenty-fifth session

Zayed Summit, Manama, Bahrain

The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), on the occasion of its twenty-fifth session, held in Manama, Bahrain, on 20 and 21 December 2004,

Being committed to the bonds of brotherhood and of a shared history and cultural heritage; looking toward the horizons of unified Arabian Gulf action; inspired by a profound realization of common political, economic, social and security challenges and of the need to coordinate, at all levels, appropriate responses to those challenges that will mobilize the forces of the member States and the capacities of their societies to preserve their stability and security and the welfare of their peoples, while facilitating their political integration,

Reaffirming that the GCC is inseparable from global development, the global economy and global security, whence the Gulf States strive to pursue the process of comprehensive modernization to keep abreast of the times and the civilizational demands of the times within the framework of a strategy in keeping with ambitious programmes, so as to realize the hopes and ambitions of the GCC countries and their brother peoples,

Guided by the declarations made by the leaders of the Arab States at their meeting held in Tunis on 22 and 23 May 2004 on development and modernization in the Arab world, which constituted an expression of the will of the Arab peoples to bring about a total renaissance in accordance with their aspirations towards greater development, including sustainable development, and integration,

Reiterates its absolute conviction of the Council leaders that the true essence of democracy cannot be imported, but must well up from the depths of the national being and the heritage and history of the GCC countries and their peoples.

The Supreme Council welcomes the invitation of the Kingdom of Bahrain to host the next meeting of the Forum for the Future of the States of the Middle East and North Africa and the Group of Eight at the end of 2005 within a framework of communication and cooperation that makes it possible to explore in greater depth the concept of renewal and reform and promotes a balanced global Arabian Gulf partnership that will enrich the dialogue and contribute to the fulfilment of national and Arab objectives in security, stability and well-being for the countries and peoples of the Gulf region and the Middle East.

Manama
9 Dhu'lqa`da 1425 A.H.
(21 December 2004 A.D.)